

July 3, 2014

This week's edition includes important information I want to share with you:

- **Middle Tennessee Community Homes Open House:** After weeks of shopping and preparing for guests, Babette, Sheila, Mary and Wanda welcomed family and friends into their brand new home on Friday, June 20. During the past few weeks, the ladies decorated their rooms with different colors and accessories to match. Babette and Wanda also planted a tomato and squash plant.



The color theme for the party consisted of bright colors and the ladies painted different colored t-shirts that read *E2 Open House 2014*.

Staff joined in on the celebration by wearing bright colored t-shirts and leis. In addition, the dining room was decorated with various hues of hydrangea flowers and other colorful decor. The day before open house, the ladies prepared a "sock-it-to-me" cake and gingerbread themed cookies. Everyone who came enjoyed the company and good food, but most of all, the smiles evident on the ladies' faces was priceless.

- **Provider Training Opportunity:** Please see the attached informational/training session invitation from the Bureau of TennCare for Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) providers on the new Department of Labor (DoL) and HCBS Setting rules. It includes a schedule of all sessions with date, time and locations as well as registration information. Registration for the Nashville session is now full; those interested are asked to register for the Middle TN session in Cookeville. Space for attendees is limited, so the Bureau of TennCare requests you limit the number of staff from your organization to three per meeting.
- **Policy Publication Notice:** The following policy has been uploaded to the DIDD Policies and Procedures home page on the Internet: 80.5.5 Transition Allowance for Money Follows the Person. You can obtain a copy of the policy [here](#).
- **A Desire to Serve:** Ever since Thomas and his sister came to West Tennessee Family Solutions (WTFS), Thomas has expressed an interest in things concerning the military. He has proven himself very knowledgeable about the U.S. Armed Forces and the many conflicts that have been fought throughout our history. He is also well-versed in world history and other wars around the globe.

Having had relatives serve our country, Thomas has always wanted to proudly follow in their footsteps. He knows being able to join would take very serious effort and hard work. Thomas was recently given a definite push in that direction, which also further piqued his interest in hopefully one day joining the U.S. Armed Forces.

WTFS recently contacted Daniel Velez, an IT Specialist who also serves as an E4 Specialist in the U.S. Army Reserves. Daniel works in the WTFS main office where Thomas currently works as a courier. During one of Thomas' runs to the office, he met Daniel, and true to his inquisitive nature, Thomas soon found out about Daniel's service in the military. He could not have been more elated to finally talk with someone at WTFS who actually served in the military. Thomas left the office that day glad to have met Daniel and grateful that he took time from his busy schedule to talk with him. Little did he know, Daniel had immediately begun contacting some officials with the Tennessee National Guard to see if it was possible for Thomas to take an actual tour of the Memphis National Guard Armory.



After discussing the tour with WTFS admin staff, plans were made and a tour was arranged. When Thomas found out, he became ecstatic. Daniel even found a set of Army fatigues that fit Thomas perfectly to wear during his tour. On tour day, Thomas was genuinely excited and once he had the uniform on, he felt an overwhelming sense of pride. The “every bit of civilian” WTFS staff with him figured Thomas and Daniel would have all the fun and probably sit around and hear old Army stories for a while, then that would be it for the day. They were almost as surprised as Thomas when SFC Paul Fisk of the National Guard, immediately took them on the grounds and provided a very interesting and informative tour of the facility. Thomas was wide-eyed and full of enthusiasm as he and his staff viewed dozens of military vehicles and artillery as well. Rain set in and the tour continued in an actual Military Humvee in which Thomas got to ride up front and work some of the equipment.

Once back at SFC Fisk's office, Paul went into his “give-away” closet and loaded Thomas and his “tag-alongs” down with National Guard items. Thomas has an Army poster, a plaque, medal, pens, pencils, lanyard, t-shirt, water bottle and a cool military bag, where he immediately stuffed all of his treasures. Paul also said he would try to hunt down a few uniforms for Thomas to have of his own. Above all of the material items received, the greatest gift was having one of his dreams come true. Thomas told Paul, “I want to serve our country just like my ancestors did. I'm a patriot.” It was obvious by the huge smile on his face and thanks to some very special people, that Thomas had an incredible day. SFC Fisk even named Thomas an honorary member of the National Guard for Tuesday, June 24. Thomas' desire is that one day he makes it official!

- **Association of People Supporting *Employment First* (APSE) Conference:** On June 30-July 3, Amy Gonzalez (State Director of Employment & Day Services) and Tyler Hampton (Executive Director of SRVS), conducted a presentation in Long Beach, CA with two individuals from Iowa; also an *Employment First* protégé state. The intention of the presentation was to talk about systems change efforts in each of our states, including how they are similar and how they differ. Additionally, each state depicted some *Employment First* videos they created and

at the end, members from the audience were challenged to return to their respective states and apply the information learned in the presentation. Denise Kirk and Gary Smith from the West Tennessee Regional Office also attended along with some staff from St. John's Community Services in West Tennessee.

- **Greene Valley Wellness Contest:** Results are in for the 2nd wellness walking/running competition at Greene Valley. Winning with an impressive 1,725 total miles was the Sole Mates team with members Robert Townsend, Kristi Mathis, Angela Neas and Jeff Grissom. The combined mileage for the 10 competing teams (40 participants) was 10,831.7 miles which is two and one-half round trips between New York City and Los Angeles! It appears the cash award was undeniably an incentive as the miles walked doubled from the competition last fall. The winning team was awarded the grand prize of \$200 at a recent facility communications meeting. Another competition is scheduled for fall and several teams are already gearing up to break the Sole Mates record.



- **West Planning and Policy Council (WPPC):** A reminder the WPPC will conduct their next meeting on July 22, 2014 at the Cordova Library (8457 Trinity Road) from 10:15 a.m.-2:15 p.m. CST. This meeting is open to the public, space permitting. For additional information or if you require ADA assistance, please contact Janet Neihoff at 731-423-5889 or Patricia Bernero at 901-745-7304.
- **Save the Date:** TennesseeWorks is hosting a Think Employment! summit on September 17, 2014 from 8:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at Scarritt Bennett Center in Nashville. Keynote and feature presentations will highlight family engagement and knowledge building, competitive and customized employment, current legislative initiatives, raising awareness and expectations, aligning agency and community supports as well as youth development and leadership. For more information, please contact Jenn Rowan at 615-875-9801 or Jennifer.L.Rowan@vanderbilt.edu.

Be safe and have a great holiday weekend!

~Debbie